

Environmental Health (EH)

Environmental Health includes factors in the natural environment such as air quality, water quality, and exposure to toxic substances as well as the built environment, including transportation, access to healthy food, and all of the physical parts of where people live, work, and play. Maintaining a healthy environment is key to increasing quality of life and years of healthy life.

This section outlines the **Environmental Health Objectives** which will be monitored over time by HSMP in order to measure local health improvement as well as examples of evidence-based strategies that can be or are currently being implemented to improve environmental health outcomes for St. Mary’s County residents.

Environmental Health Objectives

EH 1: Create neighborhoods and environments in St. Mary’s County’s rural growth areas that promote walking.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Sidewalk spending*	\$1,657,500	\$1,823,250
Percentage of Growth Area buildings within 500 feet of roads with sidewalks**	61.1%	67.2%

*Source: St. Mary’s County Budget (retrofit sidewalk program, side-path or bikeways, neighborhood revitalization, street lighting and streetscape improvements), FY22

**Source: St. Mary’s County Public GIS Map

EH 2: Reduce blood lead levels in children.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Percentage of children with blood lead levels > 10 micrograms/deciliter	0.2%	0.1%

Source: Maryland Department of Planning, MD SHIP, 2017

EH 3: (Developmental) Reduce the number of days people are exposed to unhealthy air.

EH 4: Reduce the pollution of surface and groundwater.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Number of county DPW stormwater best management practices*	1,026	1,129
Total treated impervious acres**	700.45	770.5

Source: St. Mary’s County Public GIS Map*

Source: Phase II MS4 Permit Progress Report, 2020**

EH 5: (Developmental) Reduce exposure to Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

EH 6: Increase local transportation options and assistance to support healthcare and healthy food access.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Percentage of trips made to work by public transportation	1.7%	1.9%

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019

EH 7: Increase the proportion of homes that are connected to sewer.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Homes connected to sewer	15,749	17,324

Source: Metcom, May 2021

EH 8: Reduce the number of households considered to have severe housing problems.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Percentage of households considered to have severe housing problems	12.3%	11.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2017

EH 9: Reduce household food insecurity and hunger.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Percentage of population considered to be food insecure*	10%	9%
Percentage of households below the ALICE threshold**	31%	27.9%

*Source: Map the Meal Gap, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018

**Source: United for ALICE Report, 2020

EH 10: (Developmental) Reduce exposure to radon.

EH 11: Increase the proportion of adults with broadband access to the Internet.

	County Baseline	County 2026 Target
Percentage of households with broadband of any type	84%	92.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Environmental Health Strategies

Action Team Level

- Support education around lead exposure prevention.
- Support education on improving indoor air quality.
- Advocate for decreased restrictions on local medical appointment transportation programs.
- Promote alternative transportation methods (public transportation, bicycling, walking, carpooling) and increase access to bike routes and off-road trails.
- Conduct a mapping project and gap analysis of the transit network with healthy food options.
- Promote and support housing renovation/building programs such as Christmas in July and Habitat for Humanity.
- Conduct asset mapping and gap analysis for local food resources.
- Establish a local surplus food donation program.
- Promote radon testing of all homes.
- Promote MDH radon test kit program.
- Promote policies and standards for broadband affordability.
- Promote and support community member advocacy efforts.

Organization-Specific Strategies

- Expand Safe Routes to School initiative. *(SMCHD, SMCPs, SMCSO)*
- Advocate for funding for sidewalk improvement projects. *(DPW&T)*
- Support education on lead paint exposure within prenatal education. *(SMCHD, MSMH, Obstetric Clinicians)*
- Establish baseline air quality data through BreatheWell St. Mary's. *(SMCHD, SMCPs, SMCSO)*
- Promote proper disposal of environmental contaminants. *(SMCHD, SMCSO, DPW&T)*
- Support education on Water Quality Best Management Practices. *(LUGM)*
- Support education on PFAS. *(SMCHD, MDE)*
- Monitor national PFAS standards and updates on local studies. *(SMCHD, MDE)*
- Promote Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. *(SMCHD)*
- Support education on updated septic systems, septic system maintenance, and sewer connection. *(SMCHD, Metcom)*
- Develop a post-COVID-19 septic pumping campaign. *(SMCHD)*
- Connect building trade at high schools to support local housing programs. *(SMCPs, Private Schools, Habitat for Humanity)*
- Establish local cold storage for overflow food. *(Feed St. Mary's, DED)*
- Expand local transportation options to farmers' markets and grocery stores. *(DPW&T)*
- Establish a mobile food pantry. *(Feed St. Mary's, Food Pantries)*

Community Member Strategies

- Advocate for Complete Streets.
- Advocate for lead paint abatement programs.
- Advocate for an increased number of no-idling zones.
- Advocate for a dedicated STS transit route from Lexington Park/Great Mills to Home Grown Farm Market on Saturdays.
- Advocate for housing rehabilitation loans and grant programs.
- Support the use of incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) purchases at local farmers' markets.
- Advocate for a tax deduction for the donation of food by businesses.
- Advocate for funding for broadband service to unserved/underserved areas
- Increase awareness of sustainable farming and gardening practices.